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SUBJECT: TUNA COMMISSION CONVENES IN MUSCAT

¶1. On June 7, Commercial Assistant attended the opening of the 12th session of the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) in Muscat. The conference aims to promote cooperation among IOTC members to ensure, through appropriate management, the conservation and optimum utilization of tuna stocks covered under the IOTC Agreement.

¶2. In his opening remarks to conference participants, Dr. Hamad bin Saeed al-Oufi, Under Secretary for the Ministry of Fisheries Wealth, emphasized the Sultanate's efforts to preserve its coastal-line tuna stock through the use of modern technologies. He added that Oman's hosting of the 12th session of the IOTC reinforced the country's commitment to managing its fisheries in the face of growing threats.

¶3. Alejandro Anganuzzi, the Executive Secretary of the IOTC, highlighted the current year as one of intensive work due to increased demand for tuna and the growth in certified markets. With such pressure on fishing stocks, Anganuzzi urged IOTC members to work together over the long-term to properly manage available stocks through regulated catches. Rondolph Payet, IOTC Chairman, noted that while 2007 was a great year for the tuna industry, certain issues, such as the increase in fish prices, the sustainability of current stocks, and the ability of members to abide by commitments not to over-fish, posed potential threats to the continued prosperity of the industry.

¶4. Comment: Oman's hosting of the IOTC conference comes in the wake of recent government efforts to grow the fishing industry. Last year, it moved to carve out from the Ministry of Agriculture a stand-alone ministry to promote fishing. In addition, the Omani Center for Investment Promotion and Export Development (OCIPED) sponsored a delegation of five Omani companies to the Boston Seafood Exposition in March. With the price of fish rising over 40% in the Sultanate over the past year, the government views this industry not only as a revenue generator, but also as a means to employ Omani youth. End Comment.
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